

Claims:

1 1. A system for storing and correlating various different
2 identification and attribute information about a product,
3 said system comprising:

4 a database that stores a plurality of identifiers for
5 each product, relationships between the identifiers, and for
6 each identified product, a plurality of product attributes;
7 and

8 a data collector for retrieving product information
9 from at least one external source and automatically
10 associating said retrieved product information with the
11 prestored information on the database and normalizing said
12 retrieved product information in accordance with product
13 information already stored in the database.

1 2. The system of claim 1 wherein the identifiers are
2 selected from the following group:

3 a manufacturer's model number or other identifier used
4 by the manufacturer;

5 a distributor's part number or other identifier used by
6 a distributor of said product;

7 one or more vendor's SKUs or other identifier used by
8 the one or more vendors; and

9 serial number.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the database further
stores information about features of the product.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the database assigns a
universal SKU to each product.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the database is a relational database and the relationships between the identifiers is stored as a tuple.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein the database is controlled by SQL.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein said database is contained in a server connected to a distributed network.

8. The system of claim 2, wherein the distributed network is the Internet.

9. The system of claim 8, further comprising one or more third party servers connected to the system through the Internet.

10. A method of storing product information in a database comprising the steps of:

- gathering product information from diverse external sources;
- loading the gathered product information into the database;
- for each product in said gathered information, determining whether it is already present in said database, and if so, translating associated product attribute information in said gathered information into a canonical representation as determined by an alias list in said database;
- for each product determined as not being already present in said database, adding a product identifier and related product information to said database, wherein the

16 database determines and stores the relationships between the
17 various product identifiers for each new product represented
18 in newly gathered information and stores information
19 regarding the related product information for that product
20 according to alias lists for product information terminology
21 stored in said database.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of
transmitting the product information to a third-party
server, wherein the transmitted product information contains
a product identifier used by the third-party server.

1 12. A computer-implemented method for providing to a user
2 at a single user-interactive location information relating
3 to a product or service of interest to the user, comprising
4 the steps of:

5 gathering information on the product or service,
6 including at least two of the following types of
7 information:

8 (1) a general description of the product or
9 service that includes the product/service's
10 features,

11 (2) a numerical user rating of the
12 product/service,

13 (3) one or more user reviews of the
14 product/service,

15 (4) one or more industry reviews of the
16 product/service,

17 (5) one or more comparisons between the
18 product/service and other similar items,

19 (6) a list of one or more vendors that sell the
20 product/service,

21 (7) a list price of the product/service,
22 (8) a price for the product/service at each of the
23 one or more vendors,
24 (9) data on the availability of the
25 product/service at each of the one or more
26 vendors,
27 (10) a profile on each of the one or more vendors,
28 and
29 (11) a rating and/or review for each of the one or
30 more vendors;
31 storing the gathered information according to
32 product/service identification; and
33 outputting said information to said user in a format
34 whereby said user has access to all of the gathered and
35 stored information related to the product/service of
36 interest.

1 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the steps
2 of:

3 displaying a product/service list identifying a
4 plurality of products/services; and

5 receiving a user product input selecting one of the
6 products/services from the product/service list, wherein the
7 step of displaying information displays information on the
8 selected product/service.

1 14. The method of claim 13 further comprising the steps of:

2 displaying a class list identifying a plurality of
3 classes of products/services; and

4 receiving a user class input selecting one of the
5 classes of products/services from the class list, wherein

6 the step of displaying a product/service list displays the
7 product/service list for selected class.

1 15. The method of claim 13 further comprising the steps of:
2 displaying a feature list identifying a plurality of
3 product/service features; and
4 receiving a user feature input selecting one or more of
5 the product/service features from the feature list, wherein
6 the step of displaying a product/service list displays the
7 products that have the one or more selected product
8 features.

16. The method of claim 12 wherein during the step of
displaying information on a product, the information further
comprises a picture of the product.

17. The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of
allowing the user to add to the stored information a user
review of the product/service.

18. The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of
allowing the user to add a rating of the product/service,
wherein the rating is combined with the existing numerical
user rating to form a new numerical user rating.

19. The method of claim 12 further comprising one or more
evaluations of the one or more user reviews.

20. The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of
suggesting one or more complementary products/services that
may be purchased along with the product/service of interest.

1 21. The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of
2 assigning unique integer identifiers to each character
3 string contained in said product information, and
4 associating each unique integer identifier with its
5 corresponding string in a look-up table;

6 creating a file containing product identification
7 information and product attribute information in the form of
8 a listing of said unique integer identifiers;

9 whereby client queries to said database are traversed
10 across said file, relevant integer identifiers are
11 retrieved, and corresponding character strings are obtained
12 from said look-up table for presentation to a client.

1 22. A method of carrying out a computer-implemented
2 parameter-based search of a database containing records
3 corresponding to various products, which include information
4 identifying a plurality of definable parameters describing
5 said products, comprising the steps of:

6 assigning a token integer to each character string
7 corresponding to a particular parameter in said record
8 database, wherein the value of the token integer corresponds
9 to the location of the start of said character string in the
10 database;

11 creating a look-up table of character strings, each
12 being associated with its assigned token integer;

13 creating a record search file from said records in said
14 database, wherein information from said database is
15 reorganized sequentially by parameter type, and all token
16 integers for each parameter type are arranged sequentially
17 adjacent to each other;

18 retrieving a parameter search query from a user; and

19 carrying out said search query by traversing said
20 record search file.